



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING



WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CONCERNING:

SB 294 – AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

SB 302 – AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE, ESTABLISHING A HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENT QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM AND A HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER TASK FORCE, AND REQUIRING THE DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN NATURAL PERSON OWNERSHIP INTEREST IN REAL PROPERTY

HB 5344 – AN ACT CONCERNING ADVANCE RENTAL PAYMENTS

HB 5345 – AN ACT CONCERNING SECURITY DEPOSITS

March 10, 2022

Good afternoon Senator Lopes, Representative Williams, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta and members of the Housing Committee. Please accept this written testimony on behalf of the State of Connecticut Department of Housing with regard to the proposed legislative items noted above.

The Department strongly supports **SENATE BILL 294 – AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE**. We believe that this legislation can be a critical intervention to safeguard those individuals who have experienced family violence by stabilizing their living environment, and ensuring that retaliatory action is not taken upon the victim of such violence.

With regard to **SENATE BILL 302 – AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE, ESTABLISHING A HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENT QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM AND A HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER TASK FORCE, AND REQUIRING THE DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN NATURAL PERSON OWNERSHIP INTEREST IN REAL PROPERTY**, the Department has mixed concerns with some sections of this legislation, and is opposed to others. Each section of the bill is addressed below:

Section 1: The Department has concerns about this section of the bill. As of this writing, the Department is not aware of any information regarding the number of “resident advisory boards” there may be in existence across the state. In addition, “improvements to ...residential buildings” are not typically financed through appropriated funds; rather, such improvements are done through a careful review of the physical needs of a property, and at the direction and control of the owner of such property, rather than its residents, using capital funds or reserves of the property. Finally, this section calls for such grants to be funded “within available appropriations”, and the Department is not aware of any of its appropriated funding streams being eligible for the use as described.

Section 2: The Department does not support the establishment of a task force to study the federal Housing Choice Voucher program and its implementation by in the state. The Connecticut Department of Housing is only one of the 44 public housing authorities in Connecticut that administer this program on behalf of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This program is a valuable tool in the fight to address poverty, homelessness and housing instability, both here and across the country. However, there appears to be a continuing effort by some organizations, both here in Connecticut, and across the country, to disparage the benefits this program brings to bear as a cause for the continuing existence of poverty, homelessness and housing instability. It is the opinion of the Department that a study that at its outset is targeted at linking disparate impact of this program with the development of at-risk children, youth and families, sets the stage for initiating legal action with regard to a political statement, rather than evaluate the value and effectiveness of a program that, on its surface alone, assists more than 43,000 very low and low income households maintain a stable housing environment.

Section 3: The Department supports the concept of identifying non-resident landlords for the purpose of ensuring the identification of responsible entities/organizations as it comes to property maintenance and tenant/landlord issues.

The Department opposes **HOUSE BILL 5344 – AN ACT CONCERNING ADVANCE RENTAL PAYMENTS.**

As proposed, this legislation would remove the existing security deposit protections in place for our elderly renters across the state. Currently, a landlord cannot demand a security deposit of more than one month's rent from an elderly person. This limitation is critical to maintaining the affordability of our elderly rental housing.

The Department opposes **HOUSE BILL 5345 – AN ACT CONCERNING SECURITY DEPOSITS.**

Essentially the same as House Bill 5344, this legislation would remove the existing security deposit protections in place for our elderly renters across the state. Currently, a landlord cannot demand a security deposit of more than one month's rent from an elderly person. This limitation is critical to maintaining the affordability of our elderly rental housing.

Should the members of the committee have questions regarding this testimony, the Department of Housing would be happy to engage in a discussion on any of these issues.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these pieces of legislation.